

Part of the Pattern

THE resignation of the Golap Borbora ministry was not unexpected. The surprise is that the ministry survived for 18 months despite the fact that almost since its inception, there had been much heartburning in the Janata legislature party about Borbora's choice as its leader. Golap Borbora was 'unanimously' elected the leader of the legislature party even though he was the leader of a relatively insignificant component of the Janata party only because the dominant sections of the Janata, particularly the Old Congress and the newly emergent Jana Sangh elements, had too many aspirants for the office.

But Borbora's 'unanimous' choice was not the last word, and the sniping against the leadership continued, and became more sharp after the incidents on the Assam-Nagaland border early this year. That development, and other problems like unemployment, rising prices, influx of Bangladeshi nationals and other outsiders to the detriment of local people, etc, served to strengthen the demand of the Janata dissidents for a 'reconstitution' of the ministry or even change in the leadership of the legislature party.

But the success the dissidents achieved in getting the central leadership to direct Borbora to 'reconstitute' his ministry coincided with the crisis in the party at the national level, leading to the formation of a Janata (S), which initially had just the two ministers that Borbora was forced to drop and has now four members. The other opponents of Borbora who have formally resigned from the Janata party are now ranged in two other new groupings — the Assam Janata Dal (AJD) comprising 16 members, and a Progressive Democratic Forum comprising six members. These three offshoots of the Janata — Janata (S), the Assam Janata Dal, and the Progressive Democratic Forum — account for 26 dissidents, leaving the remaining 39 members (more or less) intact in the Janata. In other words, the situation is more or less as it was before the election of the JLP leader last year, with those opposed to Borbora unable to come together. In the present instance, these offshoots of the Janata, while continuing to remain separate, have also been joined by the Congress, the Congress (I) and the CPI, with the promise that a government that might be formed by the dissidents would be supported by them.

But it is unlikely that any stable ministry might be formed by such disparate elements, or even if such a

ministry were to be formed, it would survive for long. Meanwhile, the chief minister too has not abandoned his efforts to stitch together a majority, and is trying to revive his alliance with the CPI(M), the RCPI and the PTCA — though all these together will still give him less than a working majority. Fresh elections thus appear inevitable.

Indeed, a situation seems to be shaping when fresh elections might take place in some other states as well. Apart from Gujarat, which anyway has to go to polls next year, a big question mark hangs over the ministries in the states of the Hindi belt, all of which have been affected by the developments at the national level. It is of course possible that the desire to survive might compel these administrations and the local units of the Janata and the Janata (S) not to push things to a breaking point since Indira Gandhi will have the most to gain in the event of a fall of these governments. Now that the war of attrition in the Janata party has led to its logical consequence it is possible that the chastened (and scared) Janata leaders might rest content to merely continue sniping without actually going for the kill.

8-SEP-1979.

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